

mr. C.A. Eman, also known as, Shon A, - son of Henny Eman - brought this through a motion in the Round Table Conference (RTC) and handed the petition to Her Majesty. During above-mentioned period slogans as "Aruba pa Arubiano" were most popular in the political arena. (Alofs L., 2001)

The Charter of Kingdom of the Netherlands was signed in 1954 by the partners within the Kingdom. In the "Statuut" the several areas of cooperation were defined. The distinction between local (internal) matter and Kingdom matter were split. Also the local government authorities and their positions were set in 1955 through the constitution document.

In 1971 the Movimiento Electoral di Pueblo (MEP) was established under the leadership of Mr. Gilberto François "Betico" Croes, that would become the thriving political (as well as cultural) force behind the struggle for the Status Aparte. The nationalistic feeling was stimulated in political discourse by Betico.

With the celebration of the Aruban National Anthem and Flag day, the Arubans had a cultural foundation set. The 18th of March celebration chosen by Betico, was the recognition of Betico to all that contributed to Aruba's autonomy and the Aruban separation of island Curaçao.

In 1977 a referendum was held to consult the Arubans on the options to become separate from the Netherlands Antilles. In the same year there were

demonstrations held, because of political differences between the MEP, PPA and the Central Cabinet Rozendaal. The political disgust and the anti - Curaçao feelings reached their climax.

In 1983 during a Roundtable Conference (RTC) in The Hague the decision was taken after long and difficult discussions that Aruba will be recognized as an autonomous country within the Kingdom of The Netherlands. The decision entailed that Aruba would have its Status Aparte (separate status) on January the first 1986. Conversely Aruba had to accept the decision to become an independent nation in 1996. (Alofs L., 2001)

The constitutional victory boosted the moral and fortified the patriotic Aruban feeling. The identity of Aruba as a country within the Kingdom was defined. The moral boost was overshadowed by the economic crisis in 1985. The Exxon Company made it clear that the LAGO Refinery would close its operations on Aruba by the end of 1985. This had a tremendous negative impact on the labor market and the economy in general. From this date on Aruba choose the path of the "tourism-ization" of the economy.

Has the search for our identity as a nation come to an end, or is it a continuous process?

The Aruban identity as a nation faces new challenges today. As a young economy mainly dependent on external factors, Aruba is part of a globalized economy. Aruba is not only dependent

on products, tourist, knowledge and services from abroad, but also human resources. As part of the Global economy, Aruba is vulnerable for regional and global happenings. We're very dependent on political stability within our region. So what has our autonomy accomplished in reality? The so-called autonomy and own identity faces great pressure from international influences.

Our identity faces the challenge that is called change. It must be clear that identity is dynamic. It's dependent on the factors time, surroundings and settings. Our nation can not be the same nation it was twenty five years ago. Decisions on an international level decide in what direction we should go. International regulations often protect us from autonomous decisions that might be harmful to our society. All international policies today are directed to cooperation and strategic alliances. All around us we notice regionalization processes taking place and we become part of these processes, whether we like it or not. The geographical barriers are slowly vanishing, and we are becoming more, a global citizen. The important task is to keep monitoring these changes, try to get the best out of the situation and adapt ourselves to these changes. Why don't we enrich our identity through change?

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